

TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY, THE JUDICIARY, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2006—Continued

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, we are back on the Treasury-Transportation-Housing and Urban Development bill. The minority Member, my partner, Senator MURRAY, and I are ready to do business. I understand we are waiting for final negotiations from both sides on the potential two votes that we hope will be ready to be put forward early this afternoon. As soon as we know something about that and can reach an agreement, we will advise all Senators.

In the meantime, the Kennedy amendment on minimum wage is pending. We expect there will be an alternative amendment which will be proposed, and that will be voted on right after or right before the Kennedy amendment.

We ask all Members who have an amendment they want to file to please bring it in, and we hope we can work it out with them. If it is something that can be accepted, we would like to do so because we need to finish this bill—the sooner the better.

The leaders have advised us that we will be in this week and weekend until we finish the bill. My personal preference would be to finish it this week and not on Friday afternoon or Saturday.

It would be very helpful if they would bring in those amendments. Very shortly, we will be conferring with leadership on both sides to establish an agreed-upon deadline for filing all first-degree amendments.

I thank the Chair.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I thank the chairman of the subcommittee and urge all of our colleagues to bring their amendments to the floor. As I stated last night, the chairman of the subcommittee was in a good mood. We had a great baseball game last night, from his viewpoint, for all of us who stayed up to watch the final home run. I think he is amenable to talking to anyone who would like to bring their amendments today. I would suggest our colleagues get that done. I think we all want to finish this bill, most importantly because we need to go to conference on this bill. We are again operating under a continuing resolution. There are many serious issues affecting our investment in housing, our investment in the FAA, in transportation, highways, as well as many other issues that are within this bill. We have a lot of work ahead of us in terms of getting this to conference and working out our differences with the House.

I urge my colleagues to bring their amendments to the floor. We are going to be talking about a time agreement fairly soon. If Members want their issues addressed, they need to bring them to the floor.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I ask that the pending amendment, the Kennedy amendment, be temporarily set aside.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2079

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I have another technical amendment to offer at this time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Missouri [Mr. BOND] proposes an amendment numbered 2079.

Mr. BOND. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: Ensures that PHAs will receive adequate funding for section 8 project-based vouchers)

On page 295, line 6, strike “or HOPE VI vouchers” and insert in lieu thereof: “, HOPE VI vouchers or vouchers that were not in use during the 12-month period in order to be available to meet a commitment pursuant to section 8(o)(13) of the Act”.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, this is rather technical, but it has to do with public housing authorities and their ability to use future Section 8 vouchers on project-based assistance needs. As many know, in the past public housing was constructed when the assistance was tied to the project rather than to an individual. That enabled the public housing authority or other entity to get financing to build the units and then receive the income from the Federal housing assistance.

Right now, there is a process for refining the allocation of Section 8 vouchers to public housing authorities so they do not have unused Section 8 vouchers. That has been a good thing because that means the money for housing assistance goes to those who most need it. However, the problem arises when public housing authorities need to put aside or shelve some of the needed Section 8 certificates or vouchers allocated to them in order to provide a basis of funding for construction of additional housing.

In some areas—I know in my State and across the country—we can hand out all of the Section 8 vouchers we want for people needing housing assistance, and they do not do much good because there is not housing available. So we have to have the flexibility for the public housing authorities to take some of the vouchers allocated to them and say: We will commit them to this project in order to build the housing we need.

This amendment includes funding for the projected use of Section 8 project assistance needs of public housing agencies. Normally, for developing housing within the project-based assistance, PHA would shelve the needed vouchers for the 1- to 3-year development timeline for an assisted project. Under the current approach for funding vouchers designed to assure that there were no Section 8 certificates wasted, the projected funding needs related to project-based vouchers would not be funded, thus removing the incentive or the ability to develop Section 8 housing, regardless of need.

We believe this amendment will ensure that the planned use of project-based vouchers is funded without prejudice, thus allowing the local public housing authorities in communities across the country to develop project-based assisted housing where there is not otherwise housing needed for the people who are homeless, who need better shelter in the area.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we are in agreement on this amendment. It simply will clarify for the purposes of distributing funding from Section 8 housing assistance. Public housing authorities would not be penalized for shelving vouchers temporarily to develop a longer term project. This is a fairness issue, and we are all in agreement. I urge its passage.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2079) was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. I move to reconsider the vote.

Mrs. MURRAY. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

Mr. BOND. I thank all of my colleagues. If any colleagues have compelling statements related to this issue which may be important in their States, we are happy to have those added to the RECORD with this vote. Again, we await the arrival of others with amendments on which we can work.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TALENT). Without objection, it is so ordered.

A NEW ENERGY FUTURE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I recently returned to Illinois and traveled across the State. It is interesting to me that there is one pervasive issue that you run into in every corner of my State and that is the cost of energy,

because while I was home people were still reeling from high gasoline prices, and announcements were being made about dramatic increases in natural gas costs over the winter, which means record breaking home heating fuel costs. That is going to cause as great a hardship as the high gasoline prices on many individuals and families and businesses large and small. People are changing their spending habits and driving patterns to try to offset the high cost of gasoline. Consumers are now paying about \$2.75 per gallon of gasoline. That is up over 80 cents from a year ago. Americans are now bracing for the record-high energy prices they will face when cooler weather arrives and the cold sets in.

The Energy Information Administration recently predicted nearly a 50-percent increase in home heating costs this winter. That is going to cause an extraordinary hardship on many people—those on fixed incomes, those on very limited incomes, and those who happen to live in old dwellings that do not have a lot of insulation.

I met with families all across Illinois who are struggling with these high energy costs and their family budgets. They want to know what Congress is going to do. They know we spend a lot of time on the floor of the Senate talking about a lot of things. They would like to think that 1 hour of 1 day would be spent on one issue that really makes a difference in their lives, and I think if they had their choice at this moment in Illinois, it would be the energy issue. They want to know how much profit is enough for ExxonMobil and BP before the former oil executives now in the Bush administration are shamed into action.

In the last 6 months, it is estimated that the top five oil companies in America collectively had \$52 billion in profits—recordbreaking profits. So when you start to fill up the tank and you watch that gas pump go out of control in terms of the cost, the money is going directly to the profit margins of these oil companies. Where is the voice in Washington for the consumers who are paying these gasoline prices? Do we just shrug our shoulders and say that is what happens in a free market? The high profiteers step in.

Sadly, that is the only response we have heard from this administration. These high prices are hurting everyone—families, farmers, already having a tough year in my home State, small businesses, municipalities, school districts. In the meantime, these oil and gas companies are reaping record profits. In my State of Illinois, consumers have already spent nearly \$2.5 billion more this year for gasoline than last year—\$2.5 billion. By the end of the year, that figure could more than double to over \$5 billion—spending more than \$5 billion more for gasoline this year than last year, coming right out of family budgets and the budgets of a lot of businesses, large and small.

At the same time, in the first half of this year, the big oil companies—

ExxonMobil, Chevron-Texaco, ConocoPhillips, BP, and Royal Dutch/Shell—recorded a combined \$52 billion in profits compared to a record \$39.5 billion in the first half of 2004. They were doing pretty well last year with the lower prices we were paying. Look at this year—\$52 billion in profit taking. That is not sales. That is \$52 billion in profits at a time when Americans are worrying about how they are going to get to work and how they are going to heat their homes this winter.

Soon third-quarter earnings will be coming out. I suspect it is going to show the oil companies are doing quite well, thank you.

Who is paying the price? For one, airlines. Today, three airlines in the United States are in bankruptcy largely because of high fuel costs. Second, American consumers. Consumers are paying an additional \$600 to \$1,000 a year so they can drive to work or school. Take an average American, someone who drives 15,000 miles a year, averages 20 miles a gallon. An 80-cent increase in the price of a gallon of gas this past year equates to an additional \$600 out of pocket for that one driver this year, that's at today's gasoline price. Consider for a minute what this means to people of modest means.

We have a pending amendment in the Chamber about raising the minimum wage in America. I think it has been about 8 years since we touched that one. What is it, \$5.15 an hour. So people get up every morning, go to work, doing the right thing, trying to care for their families at \$5.15 an hour, and for 8 years we have run into resistance from people in the Senate who say: That is plenty. That is enough. We don't need to guarantee any higher minimum wage.

Think about it. I ran into a fellow in Illinois who said: I don't understand how a person on minimum wage filling up the tank of an old car trying to get back and forth to work comes ahead at all. And that is the reality of life for so many people who are literally going to work and falling behind every single day. And the high gasoline prices, sadly, are now part of the major problem these people face. At today's gas prices, total fuel costs for one vehicle is \$2,000-plus each year. Double that for a family who needs two cars to commute to work. Fuel costs for that family are over \$4,000.

Think of a low-income family. At \$5.15 an hour, gross take-home pay for the year is about \$10,000. Now take out \$2,000 for buying gasoline before you pay any income taxes or other charges against your payroll. Imagine, if you will, these are people in our country, vulnerable people who are asking if there is anybody in Washington listening. They are knocking on the door of the Senate, and nobody is opening the door. Historically, the end of the summer driving season meant there would be some relief from summer gas price hikes. While we witnessed a slight drop, consumers will see no relief from energy costs.

Unfortunately, as I said, gasoline prices are just part of the problem. Heating costs are expected to be significantly higher this year. Nationwide, 55 percent of all households depend on natural gas as their primary heating fuel. In the Midwest, according to the Energy Information Administration's most recent outlook, about 75 percent of households rely on natural gas to heat their homes. This winter, those households can expect to pay nearly 50 percent more than last year for natural gas. Weather forecasts suggest this coming winter may be colder than last year, which means even higher home heating bills. High gasoline, natural gas, and heating oil prices are forcing a slowdown in consumer spending, an increase in consumer prices, more inflation, and the greatest increase in the number of people who are delinquent in paying credit card bills since the 1970s energy crisis. These high energy costs are rippling through the American economy, and they are hurting a lot of hard-working families.

We passed the so-called Energy bill this last August. It was signed by the President with great ceremony. What did that bill do? Primarily it funneled billions in subsidies to oil companies—to the same oil companies that are experiencing record profits? Why in the world aren't we focusing on things that can literally and really make a difference when it comes to America's energy future?

Let me tell you the impact some of these energy prices are having. In the second quarter of 2005, this year, the American Bankers Association reported that the percentage of credit card bills 30 days or more past due reached the highest level since they began recording information 32 years ago. People are falling further and further behind, and the ABA's chief economist cited high gasoline prices as a major factor.

I can't forget the fellow I ran into back in my hometown of Springfield, IL, just a few days ago who said: Senator, I understand my credit card company is going to require me to pay 4 percent, 4 percent of my balance each month. Now it only requires 2 percent. I don't know if I can pay 4 percent.

How in the world can that poor fellow and his family ever get ahead? Their debt keeps increasing as they run up the cost for gasoline for this fellow to get back and forth to work. There is no end in sight.

Earlier this year, the Democrats in the Senate offered an amendment to the Energy bill that would have finally put America on a path to reducing consumption of foreign oil imports by 40 percent in the next 20 years. Is that a good thing for America, for us to reduce our dependence on foreign oil? You would certainly think so. Should it be a partisan issue? Should Democrats and Republicans disagree on that? Why would they ever disagree? But they did, all but two.

We are going to continue to support this measure on this side of the aisle. I

hope that since that vote a few months ago, my friends on the other side of the aisle will take another look at it. This should be the underpinning of our energy policy in America, to lessen our dependence on foreign oil. We know America can do better than be held hostage to high energy bills dictated by Saudi sheiks and big oil CEOs. President Bush even rejected a modest 1-million-barrel-per-day oil saving provision that was written in the Senate Energy bill. We tried to at least move just ever so slightly toward conservation, energy efficiency. It was rejected.

We understand the President and Vice President have close ties personally and in their background with the oil industry. But shouldn't our national priority of more energy independence have been more important than that? Just before the Senate recessed to work back in our States, I joined my colleagues in sending a letter to President Bush requesting him to call on his friends and allies in the oil and gas industry to sit down with them and make it clear that their profiteering at the expense of the average person in America is killing the American economy and causing extreme hardship to honest people going to work every single day. We still haven't seen the first indication of action from the White House.

In August, before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, when gas prices were about \$2.55 a gallon, I joined my colleagues, Senator REID of Nevada and Senator CANTWELL of Washington, in a letter to President Bush asking him to show Presidential leadership in reducing fuel prices, including profiteering and price gouging. Still no response from the White House.

We proposed a set of principles on the Democratic side of the aisle. We believe these put America first. We believe that American consumers, businesses, and farmers should be better protected from multinational corporations reaping record profits at the expense of the average consumer and the average business in America.

In the next day or so, I am going to introduce legislation to help address some of these issues, including a desperately needed funding bill for the LIHEAP program. LIHEAP is the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. We should tax the windfall profits of these huge oil and gas companies that are recording billions upon billions of dollars of profit at the expense of families and consumers across America. We should transfer part of this money to a LIHEAP trust fund so that the poorest folks across America, the most vulnerable, have a chance to heat their homes this winter. That is pretty basic. This fund would ensure that there are resources available on top of what has already been appropriated by Congress for families hurt by high energy costs. We are proposing other measures on the Democratic side to protect consumers as well. Senator CANTWELL and 26 cosponsors have in-

troduced a bill to ban gasoline price gouging and improve market transparency. This all fits under the basic idea of protecting America's consumers.

Senators MIKULSKI, PRYOR, SALAZAR, BILL NELSON, HARKIN, CORZINE, STABENOW, and OBAMA have introduced an amendment to the appropriations bill calling for the Federal Trade Commission to investigate nationwide gas prices that we witnessed immediately after Hurricane Katrina to see if there is clear evidence of profiteering.

Senators KERRY and REED of Rhode Island offered an amendment to add funds for the LIHEAP program so low-income families most affected by record energy prices can heat their homes this winter.

Senator BINGAMAN and 14 other cosponsors proposed an amendment to the Energy bill that would require 10 percent of electricity generated be produced from renewable sources by the year 2020. This measure would ease the stress on natural gas and help to alleviate the high prices we have currently witnessed.

Senators SCHUMER, CANTWELL, and LAUTENBERG introduced a bill to increase national fuel efficiency which would also save energy.

I have introduced a bill as well, the Strategic Gasoline and Fuel Reserve Act of 2005. We already have a Strategic Petroleum Reserve—that can hold 700 million barrels of crude oil the President can turn to in times of national emergency. But when we have refining capacity compromised by a hurricane, crude oil is not going to be released and make it to the market very quickly. So I am proposing that the United States, like some European countries, create a strategic gasoline and jet fuel reserve. Let's set aside refined product, gasoline and jet fuel, around the United States so the President has another tool to use when we see these price spikes to help businesses like America's airlines and other businesses overcome these skyrocketing prices.

America needs a long-term plan to diversify our energy resources. We have to do this to improve energy efficiency, conservation, and to prevent the energy giants from market manipulation and price gouging. It does not appear there is any cop on the beat in Washington. There is no one who is either threatening or punishing the profiteers who are raising the price of energy unconscionably. For a long time, the finger of blame was pointed at the OPEC cartel and the Saudi sheiks, but we know now that their profit increase is modest, about 46 percent over last year, compared to the dramatic and obscene record profit increases by the big oil companies of 255 percent over last year. That is where the money is going. It is going to the boardrooms of the largest oil companies in America.

This administration and this Congress are mute. They definitely do not want to rock the boat when it comes to

their friends in these big oil companies. Instead, the only response from the administration is a plea by the Secretary of Energy for a campaign to conserve energy. Well, that is a good thing. But should not the administration also be there to protect consumers and to punish profiteers in addition to preaching conservation?

This is what the President said:

We can all pitch in . . . by being better conservers of energy.

Here are some suggestions: Drive less, replace traditional light bulbs with more efficient light bulbs, keep your car well maintained, and your tires properly inflated, and seal leaky windows and doors; all very nice and practical suggestions. But would it not be nice if these practical ideas of conservation were accompanied by some effort by this administration to hold the oil companies responsible for profiteering at the expense of American consumers? Not a word.

I strongly support conservation efforts. Changes in that way can make a significant difference and save Americans millions of dollars. But President Bush's plea for conservation is like putting a gallon of gas in a Hummer and expecting to drive 50 miles.

While small conservation steps will help manage the current energy crisis, we need a broader policy change that includes a long-term commitment to expanding and diversifying energy sources. We have to expand the use and access to alternative fuels, create a more efficient transportation sector, increase the efficiency of our homes, and promote conservation. We need energy policies that place national interests before corporate interests, that put the well-being of the American family before energy CEOs, and make investments to strengthen America's energy security, instead of providing tax cuts to make America's wealthiest individuals and corporations even wealthier.

This administration will not consider such measures, and in many cases they blatantly rejected them. Before the recent call for conservation, the Bush administration had done virtually nothing to develop long-term energy solutions and promote efficiency and conservation. While President Bush now calls for conservation, his own Department of Energy quietly helped prevent advancements on new building efficiency standards for insulation, standards that would have increased efficiency in new homes, saving billions of dollars in energy costs for Americans over the next few decades.

The other thing we have to do, as a fundamental policy when it comes to energy in policy, is to focus on the fuel efficiency of the cars and trucks we drive. When we faced the oil crisis in the 1970s, we understood we were driving cars and trucks that were not adequately fuel efficient. The fleet average of fuel economy for cars and trucks across America was about 14 miles a gallon. So Congress knew there were

two ways to push the automobile manufacturers toward more fuel-efficient cars. One was if the price of gasoline went up dramatically, people would make the decision on their own they needed a more fuel-efficient car, but of course that involved a lot of economic pain in the process. The other was to establish federally mandated standards for fuel efficiency for cars and trucks in America.

So what was the response of the Big Three in Detroit when we said in 1975 that they should double the fuel economy of cars and trucks in America from 14 miles a gallon to 28 miles a gallon over 10 years? They said as follows: It is technologically impossible; the cars and trucks that we build will be so unsafe you will regret the decision pushing for more fuel efficiency, and this will definitely drive more imports into America because the Japanese and others will focus on making those more fuel-efficient cars.

Thank goodness Congress rejected those three arguments by the automobile manufacturers and in 1975 imposed the CAFE standards. As a result, 10 years later, the average fuel efficiency had doubled in the United States. All of the ominous warnings from Detroit notwithstanding, we as a nation did the right thing. The one wrong thing we did was to carve out an exemption for trucks. It turned out that exemption was so broadly worded that they drove the big old Hummers and SUVs right into it as they were exempt from the highest standards.

And what happened next? America got this voracious appetite for these huge hunks of metal on the highway which burn up the gasoline as fast as the tank can be filled, and we watched the average fuel efficiency in 1985 go down from 28 miles a gallon to about 21 miles a gallon today. We have gone in the wrong direction. We are burning more gasoline for the same miles that we drove in 1985.

What have we done in Congress since then to establish new CAFE standards for America's cars and trucks? Absolutely nothing. When I called for an amendment in the Energy bill debate to establish national CAFE fuel efficiency standards over the next 10 years, improving fuel efficiency by 1 mile a gallon each year for 10 years, the amendment was defeated, with only 28 Senators supporting it. Americans I have run into, and certainly people in my home State of Illinois, shake their head when they are told that story. They ask, what are these Senators thinking? Why would we not move as a national policy toward more fuel-efficient vehicles?

Well, the automobile dealers have realized that. They have car lots full of SUVs and heavy trucks that consumers are walking right by, saying, well, what is the fuel efficiency of that car? How many miles per gallon on that truck? They are asking the hard questions now because gasoline prices are going up. I think it is time to return to

this debate on CAFE and to put honest fuel efficiency standards on the books in America, to demand that those in Detroit and others take into consideration the fact that we need to lessen our dependence on foreign oil and we need to give consumers an opportunity.

Earlier this year my wife and I were considering buying a car. We wanted an American car. My wife drives it more than I do. She takes it on the highway so we wanted a larger car, but we did not want an SUV. Try to find that highway-type car made in America that is fuel efficient. We finally found one, the Ford Escape hybrid. We bought one. How many were made in the United States this year? Only 20,000. There is a long waiting list for people to buy these cars. Ford says they hope in years to come they will start producing more of them.

Meanwhile, Japanese automobile manufacturers are making these hybrid cars and selling them as fast as they make them. It is a shame again that Detroit was asleep at the switch and they did not see this coming. They tend to react a little too late and, sadly, that is one of the reasons they face the financial difficulties they do.

While increasing efficiency of our vehicles is no longer an option, it is a necessity. Consumers are demanding better fuel efficiency, and unfortunately American auto companies are realizing a little too late that they did not think ahead.

In the past month, General Motors witnessed a 24-percent decline in sales over the same month last year. Ford sales were down 20 percent, while U.S. sales of Japanese automobiles increased 10 to 12 percent. Sales of hybrid vehicles soared. In the past month, Honda Civic hybrid sales increased 37 percent. So while the Senate does not get it when it comes to fuel efficiency and fuel economy of cars, consumers get it and they are saying with their checkbooks and credit cards they are going to buy the vehicles that make more sense.

I believe American ingenuity can meet this test, can produce the cars and trucks we need to keep our economy moving forward with safe cars that are much more fuel efficient.

We also need to invest in the production of alternative fuels and provide incentives for their use. We need to break the stranglehold of big oil, open the market to real competition, and give American consumers real energy choices. Ford recently announced more production of its dual fuel vehicles. That is good news, but we know there is only a small number of vehicles on the road that actually use these alternative fuels. The gas-saving potential of these vehicles is largely wasted. We should be promoting the actual use of alternative fuels that can reap the benefits of new gas-saving technologies.

The fact that we included language in the Energy bill to increase ethanol production and biodiesel is all good, but it is only a small part of the battle.

We need to make sure that ethanol reaches the market and that there are cars equipped for E-85 and ethanol compliance so consumers can take advantage of the benefits of their home-grown fuel.

America has 3 percent of the world's known oil reserves. We use 25 percent of the world's oil. We can never, ever drill our way out of this challenge. There is no way we can find energy independence by drilling away in the pristine areas that have been protected around America, including the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It is a sad indictment on this administration and this Congress that instead of accepting the challenge of conservation and fuel efficiency, instead of asking for sacrifice and a dedicated commitment from the automobile companies as well as American consumers, we are going to run willy-nilly into a national wildlife reserve that was created by President Eisenhower over 50 years ago and say the only way we can meet our needs is to start drilling away for oil, the environment be damned.

The big oil companies and many of my colleagues want to open this Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I have been there. It would be a tragic mistake. Sadly, if we do it, over 20 years it will produce less than 1 year's worth of oil supply for the United States. This is not the answer to our prayers. In fact, we should be condemned for turning our back on this great piece of America that we are willing to exploit because of our own bad energy policies. Instead of destroying this national habitat, we should think strategically and creatively to find new ways to meet our future energy needs.

America can do better, and when it comes to our energy policy it is clear we are missing the responsibility that Members of Congress should share. We need to protect America's consumers. We need to punish the profiteers and we need to promote, on a national scale, efficiency, conservation and alternative fuels. America can only do better with leadership and a clear energy policy and a plan. We have to look beyond the quarterly profits of the big oil companies and the clout they have on Capitol Hill and remember that we are serving the public, voters across America, who have to face every single day these skyrocketing gasoline prices and the prospects of a very cold and expensive winter.

I believe in American creativity and innovation, and I know that together we can create a better future for our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who seeks recognition?

The Senator from Missouri is recognized.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, it is very interesting to hear this speech on energy. There were a couple of things my colleague from Illinois said that I agree with. No. 1, energy prices are a real problem. No. 2, LIHEAP needs to

be reviewed by the appropriate Labor-HHS appropriations subcommittee. No. 3, the good things we are doing in ethanol and biodiesel need to continue. No. 4, maybe he did not say it on the floor, but he and I both agree on the St. Louis Cardinals. That is about the extent of the things I could find on which we agree.

Let me go through a few of them. First, all of us are paying more at the gasoline pump. This is having a conservation impact. People are driving less. Everybody is thinking about how they can take fewer trips. Certainly we are in our family. I believe the statistics show that people are conserving more. Talk about turning back your heat during the winter, we are one of those families—I think it is 57 percent of the families in the United States—who heat with natural gas. That thermostat is not going to go down a couple of degrees; it is going to go down more than that. We are going to be pulling out the sweaters.

There are some people who cannot do anything about it. There are workers who have to travel on jobs. There are small businesses that are trying to keep their businesses going. There are farmers who have to keep up with those prices. This is a real concern for our economy. For small businesses that will be hit by increased costs of energy for operating their business, my colleague seems to want to add a minimum wage increase. When your margins are being squeezed by energy costs, what happens if the minimum wage goes up? Those young people, the people just starting out in the business, the people who might be getting minimum wage—and it is down around 6 percent of workers these days—are probably going to be the ones let go. The people who need to get a start in the process, who need to get a job, are the ones who are going to lose their jobs because the minimum wage is going to put a further squeeze on the profits of small businesses. To see a requirement that they pay a higher cost for entry-level workers is either going to eliminate existing jobs or certainly stifle the creation of new jobs.

For those people on minimum wage, for those families, we have the earned-income tax credit; we have all forms of assistance and this is proper. We need to help those people get started because a significant number, an overwhelming number of those starting with the minimum wage get a 10-percent increase at the end of the first year. They have to learn to work, and that is how they get started.

Let's go back to the problems we have with energy. We have real problems in energy that came about even before Katrina and Rita hit our refineries and hit the gulf coast. We concentrated our petroleum production mainly in the gulf coast region around Texas and Louisiana. Why? Because too many people said, No, you can't drill here. In other places where we have oil and gas, they are being prohib-

ited from drilling. People say we can't drill for natural gas off the coast, and I say, Why not? We have to do so in an environmentally sound manner. We have to protect the environment. But siting a natural gas rig 15 miles out in the sea, if it is done in an environmentally sound way, is not threatening the way of life of people along our coast.

The occupant of the chair and I happen to come from a State where we mine a lot of lead. Lead mining is environmentally difficult. Everybody knows the problems lead can cause, but lead is absolutely critical in many of the goods we produce, computers, and other things. So we produce much of the lead in the United States because we have 90 percent of the lead that exists in the United States. I have told some of my friends who do not want to drill for natural gas in their States or off their shores, we in Missouri would be happy to trade you our lead for your natural gas. You can mine for the lead and we will be happy to pump the natural gas. Natural resources have to be developed where they are found.

Ten years ago, we passed a bill authorizing the opening up of that small portion, and only a fraction of that small portion, set aside in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for the development of natural resources. When ANWR was set up, there was a portion set aside specifically for the development of natural resources. To the west of there in Prudhoe Bay, they are producing oil in substantial amounts. The best estimates we have heard is that if we had gone ahead, if the President 10 years ago had not vetoed the opening up of ANWR, we would be getting over 900,000 barrels of oil a day from the ANWR. That is not going to solve all of our problems, but it is certainly a start. Regrettably, it is a lot more than even our farmers can produce in terms of ethanol and biodiesel.

We need to pursue every area. That includes conservation. That includes new sources. That includes developing additional resources that we have in the United States. Right now, because we are busily engaged in a bill that primarily doesn't have anything to do with energy—and I remind my colleagues this is the TTHUD appropriations bill. We are talking about appropriations for Treasury, Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development. My colleague and I are looking forward to having amendments on that bill and also the Judiciary and related agencies.

There is a hearing going on in the Environment and Public Works Committee, and I would love to be there because the chairman has proposed a bill to fast-track permitting for refineries. It can take up to 20 years to get a refinery built. It is too costly. Our refinery capacity for petroleum products has been stretched to the limit. When Katrina and Rita knocked out those facilities, we found ourselves in a terrible shortage. We need to streamline

the process, go through all the steps but do so in an orderly manner so we can bring more refineries online in an efficient and environmentally friendly way.

Incidentally, what we need to do in that fast-track permit is to fast-track permitting of coal liquefaction and coal gasification. We are sitting on a 250-year supply of energy in the form of coal. We are the Saudi Arabia of coal. Coal has been a problem because, when you burn it as we have in the past, it produces sulfur, nitrous oxides, carbon, and mercury. But the coal we have in the Midwest, while it is high in sulfur, is high in Btu, and it can be turned into gas or turned into diesel fuel or aviation fuel in a way that removes almost all, if not all, of the pollutants.

We need to get coal refineries putting online plants to replace the natural gas that is being burned in utility boilers. Wasting natural gas in utility boilers has come home to roost. Twenty-five years ago, I heard Glenn Seaborg, a Nobel Prize winner, talking about energy. He said there are some people who want to burn natural gas in combustion boilers to produce energy. He said using natural gas for that purpose is similar to taking your most prized piece of antique furniture and throwing it in the fireplace to keep you warm. That is a bad use.

But environmental policies without considering energy impacts forced most of the new electric generating plants in the last decade to come online on natural gas. All those who are heating with natural gas are paying the price now. We can get a replacement for that natural gas by using gasified coal, but we need to do so pretty darned quick.

We need to open up areas for the production of natural gas. One of the things we should remember is that the natural gas problem, the crisis we face, is not only brought about by constriction and restriction on the ability to produce the natural gas that exists off our coasts, in our Federal land, in the resource-producing areas set aside when ANWR was developed, but we are also facing a natural gas crisis because we have forced utility companies to burn natural gas to produce electricity. We need to be smarter and replace that natural gas with coal gas.

We also have had hysteria over nuclear power. Nuclear power is the most environmentally friendly, cheapest way to produce electricity. Thanks to the Energy bill we passed, we are moving ahead to develop new nuclear power. Our nuclear power facilities are getting old. There has never been a death; they are the safest means of energy production we have. Look at France, not an area we normally cite as an example, but 80 percent of their electricity is generated by nuclear. We need to go back to development of the new style, safe nuclear powerplants, and bring them online as quickly as we can.

My colleague had some interesting ideas. I am not surprised the leadership

of the other party would come forth with taxes and windfall profits and ideas such as that, that might sound good, unless you study economics. Then you wonder, when was it that we passed a law making profits illegal? We do have laws. We have laws against restraint of trade. We have laws against price fixing, that say you cannot gain a profit by agreeing with your competitor to fix prices. We have unfair competition laws on the books at the FTC, and many States do, about price gouging. But profits, No. 1, are taxed and, No. 2, are supposed to be providing the investment we make in the new facilities, for example to produce more oil and gas and coal, to refine it and to deliver it to market.

Profiteering—I am not exactly sure at what level making a profit is improper or illegal. I have spent a lot of time as a lawyer on legal cases coming out many years ago on the windfall profits tax, and I found for law firms, litigating windfall profits is a multiyear endeavor with more funds expended on lawyers than recovered. It is not an easy process and not one for which I would argue.

Also, the suggestion has been made that we ought to establish higher CAFE standards. We have had that debate. We have had that debate a number of times. If I remember correctly, a bipartisan majority got behind something called the Bond-Levin or the Levin-Bond amendment, which said we need to increase our fuel efficiency standards, but we should not make the same mistakes we made originally. Yes, when we passed CAFE standards, one of the ways the CAFE standards were met were car companies building lighter weight cars, 1,000 or 2,000 pounds lighter. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has said between 1,600 and 2,000 people a year are killed on the highways solely because of the lighter cars.

Yes, more cars are being imported, consumers are seeing more cars coming in from abroad, and they are demanding more fuel-efficient cars, such as hybrid cars, and that is good. But we passed a law mandating the NHTSA to increase the fuel standards as rapidly as technology will permit them to increase those standards without endangering the lives of the passengers by making lighter weight vehicles. So we do have an agency looking out for safety, looking out for the technical advances. Technology has already warranted their increasing the fuel mileage on light trucks and other autos.

If you want to, I guess my colleagues on the other side could come out and pass a law banning hybrids, saying you cannot buy an SUV, you can't buy a small truck. Maybe you would have to get a permit if you were a farmer. That is the way they did it in the Soviet Union. You only got a truck if the government decided you needed a truck. I am not sure we want to go down that path, saying we are going to tell you what kind of truck you can have, and if

you have a large family and want to be able to transport them to school, to church, to health care, to see other family members, the Government is going to decide how big a car or how big an SUV you can have. If they want to debate that I would be happy to do that. But as long as we are selling cars and trucks that consumers want, I think pushing the technology as fast as we can is a responsible way to get there.

Yes, I also agree we ought to consider LIHEAP increases to help low-income seniors. That is good. We need to push ethanol and biodiesel. The occupant of the chair was successful in getting the amendment adopted that mandated 7.5 billion gallons of renewable fuels be used by 2012. All of these things are important. I believe we must get a good refinery bill fast-tracking refineries.

In the meantime, as we think about all these energy problems, I hope my colleagues will come forward with their amendments to this bill, as I mentioned a long time ago, the Treasury, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Judiciary.

Let us see if we can't get some amendments on this bill and move forward with that.

I thank the Chair and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARTINEZ). The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, let me first commend my colleague from Missouri.

For those who are witnessing this, it is becoming dangerously close to real debate on the floor of the Senate. This is history in the making. It almost never happens that two Senators who disagree on an issue will stand and argue their point of view back and forth. One of the reasons I wanted to run for this body was because I could come over here and engage in debate. I certainly respect the Senator from Missouri. We have much different views on energy, and I think he has articulated his point of view as clearly as one could hope for with a moment's notice. He didn't know I was coming to the floor to talk about energy. He did an excellent job.

I would like to clarify a few things. The first point is this: It was the wisdom of our Founding Fathers which said that every State in the Union would have two Senators, which means the State of Missouri has two Senators and the State of Illinois has two Senators. I wish the very best for the St. Louis Cardinals, and I am certain that the two Missouri Senators are rooting every moment of every day for their victory. But this Senator from Illinois is backing an Illinois baseball team known as the Chicago White Sox. They were successful in winning the American League pennant. I hope they go all the way in the World Series. Despite my boyhood roots, I am rooting for the Illinois baseball team. I had better say that clearly on the record or I can't go home.

The second thing I say is when it comes to energy, I listened carefully to

what the Senator from Missouri had to say. In virtually every instance, he suggested there were ways to find new and better and larger sources of energy to take care of our problem. I listened closely for any suggestion from him that we should have conservation and efficiency as part of a national energy policy. If he said it, I missed it.

I think it is a critical part, because we have to understand that the conservation of energy means not only that we reduce the costs for families and businesses to provide the same level of goods and services, we also reduce the pollution that is a product of burning energy across America. It is a "two-fer." If you believe we can keep finding new energy sources, whether it is oil in a national wildlife refuge up in Alaska or drilling off some of the coasts where Governors—both Democrats and Republicans—have said we do not accept that as something we want as part of our State's economy, if you keep looking for these new energy sources, you are ignoring the obvious. And the obvious is that fuel efficiency and fuel conservation should be part of what we do in America. We have learned that over the years. We haven't compromised our lifestyle while we found more fuel efficiency in so many different areas of our life every part of every day.

I will concede that the Senator from Missouri did join the Senator from Michigan in putting together an amendment that at least mentioned the words "fuel efficiency" and "conservation" in the last Energy bill. But I have to say in all fairness that is all it did. It didn't put any requirement on the automobile manufacturers to make more efficient cars and trucks across America.

Every time you talk about CAFE standards and fuel efficiency, we get a history lesson about what the Soviet Government was all about—top-down government, mandating these policies, forcing rugged individuals who would like to go their own way to march in close rank and march in line.

I have to say I view this a lot differently. Left to their own devices, the major automobile manufacturers in America made hundreds of thousands of cars and trucks which Americans don't want to buy. They are now crowding our lots with heavy trucks and SUVs, and Americans are walking right past them. Instead, we should have thought long ago about establishing standards that would give consumers a choice in America.

Why is America coming in second when it comes to automotive technology? When it came to hybrids, the Japanese automobile manufacturers, Honda and Toyota, got the jump on the United States. Are they smarter than we are? I don't think so. Many of their engineers and research scientists went to school in the United States and went back to their countries to build the cars and trucks Americans wanted to buy. For some reason, Detroit is always a little behind the curve, and in



this situation, it is dangerous because they are so far from profitability and they have such dramatic costs that they made a terrible calculation by sticking with these heavy vehicles as the price of fuel and energy went up across America. I don't think it is the heavy hand of Government. I think it is good public policy for us to move forward on a policy for CAFE standards that increases fuel efficiency. The argument that that means unsafe cars I don't accept. I happen to believe that in an era of new technologies for safety and otherwise, there are ways to improve the cars and trucks we drive in terms of safety without compromising fuel efficiency.

There are things we can do—creative approaches already recognized by the scientific agencies in Washington—that could be part of cars and trucks in the future. They are not, and they should be. For us to move forward on that as a national policy is to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. If you believe, as I do, that is a worthy national goal, then conservation and fuel efficiency have to be part of it.

The second issue which I raise, and which the Senator from Missouri mentioned, was a bill that could come before us soon, already having passed the House, that would suggest that in order to have the oil we need in America, in order to expand oil refinery capacity, we have to waive the pollution rules when it comes to air pollution and water pollution, and we have to waive the environmental standards refineries have been held to in America. The argument is, if you do not waive these environmental standards, we will not have enough gasoline, and you will have to pay more. It is a classic "your money or your life" argument, because these environmental and pollution standards are there for a purpose.

I invite my colleague from Missouri and all of my friends to visit any classroom of any school in America and ask the following question: How many students in this classroom know someone who has asthma? Watch the hands go up. Do you know why? Because across America these lung problems that air pollution has some relation to are becoming epidemic. Visit a major hospital in St. Louis or Chicago—a children's hospital in particular—and ask in the emergency room what the No. 1 diagnosis is of children brought into their emergency room. I can virtually guarantee it is going to be asthma. What are we going to do? We are being asked to waive the air pollution standards for certain industries and for refineries so we can get cheaper gasoline while we breathe dirtier air. What a terrific bargain for America. Is that as good as it gets with this administration? They cannot meet the energy needs of America without asking us to compromise our public health, to compromise the safety and quality of water that we drink, to compromise environmental standards that have been established for years.

This morning, a major company from Illinois—I spoke to one of their representatives—said several years ago under the Clinton administration they agreed to a reformulation of diesel fuel in America, a long-term project that would make diesel fuel cleaner in America. Do you know what diesel fuel looks like, or used to look like as it came with billowing smoke out of the tailpipes of cars and trucks? They want to move to the point where it is much cleaner. Years ago, we made a commitment as a nation to move to reformulating diesel so it is cleaner for America.

One of the bills before the Congress today waives that reformulation requirement after 6 years of investment in cleaner diesel fuel and cleaner diesel engines. This administration says we have to abandon that, go back to more air pollution from diesel use in order to have cheaper gasoline we can buy across America. What a tradeoff, what an abdication of leadership. America can certainly do better than that.

To have this administration tell us that the only answer to affordable energy is to compromise the public health and to put up with more air and water pollution is a completely unacceptable alternative. I wouldn't want to go to the Senator from the State of Florida, who is in the chair, and tell him that the Federal Government is going to mandate drilling off the coast of Florida. I can tell you that the Governor of Florida, who happens to share the same last name as the President, doesn't think that is a very good idea.

For the suggestion that may have been made here that we need to start moving and burning and drilling off the States that don't want oil drilling and gas drilling off their coasts is a major move by this administration.

Again, you have to ask the basic question: Why would we do anything that radical from Washington to deal with energy before we even discuss the possibility of conservation and fuel efficiency of the cars and trucks we drive? I think we have to accept responsibility. It isn't just a question of answering every challenge in America by saying, party on, you know we are going to find some more energy for you, just keep using it up, don't pay any attention until tomorrow. I think America understands, and our younger people understand better, that we need a serious energy policy that challenges every single one of us as consumers not only to turn down the thermostat, but be smarter in the cars and trucks we buy, challenge the manufacturers in Detroit to produce cars and trucks that are mindful of energy needs across America and the increasing costs of that energy to families and our economy. We need a government with the leadership that is responsive to this national challenge.

The last Energy bill didn't do it. The ink was hardly dry in August until the Members of the Senate said we had better get back and write a new energy bill.

For goodness sakes, that is the greatest single condemnation of the substance of that bill I can think of. We all know it is true. That last energy bill didn't do it. In a few isolated areas, as I mentioned earlier, it is a good bill. But, by and large, it didn't address the fundamental problem facing us today and for years to come.

The last point I will make is this: America's most serious competition in the world today comes from one country, China. China right now is mushrooming in growth. They are building new industries right and left. If you walk into a Wal-Mart to buy a product, you are walking into the largest importer of Chinese goods in America, Wal-Mart selling all across the United States. The obvious question is this: What is China doing about its energy needs? First, it is doing something we are not doing. It is imposing higher fuel efficiency standards on its cars and trucks than we do in America. The Chinese are thinking ahead. They understand that inefficient cars and trucks are not part of a bright energy future.

The second thing they are doing is fighting us tooth and nail in every site around the world where energy can be purchased. They are now our competition for the purchase of energy. Twenty years ago, we didn't even think about it. They did not have an economy that used that much energy. They weren't producing goods and services. That world has changed.

Now, as we continue to be dependent on foreign oil, we are going to have to continue to fight the Chinese and others for affordable fuel. That is the reality of global competition.

Does it make sense for us now to take a step back and say as a national energy policy we ought to figure out ways to keep the American economy moving, businesses thriving, and jobs being created, but also build into that energy conservation and efficiency?

That to me is so obvious. Every time I bring it up in a town meeting in Illinois, people shake their heads and say, You are honestly debating that in Washington; it seems so obvious. We are debating it. So far I have lost that debate. But as energy prices go up and people realize that the energy policy of this administration has failed, I hope we revisit this important issue.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I had not intended to extend this wonderful discussion because we were trying to get amendments on the Treasury, Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Judiciary bill. I invite people to come down and offer amendments. However, since my colleague and neighbor brought it up, I thought I might mention a few things.

No. 1, while he might want to root for the White Sox in the World Series, I was hoping he would not neglect and disregard and disrespect all of our wonderful Illinois neighbors who live in the southern part of the State who are St.

Louis Cardinal fans. It is with a heavy heart that I tell the people of southern Illinois that the Cardinal fans have been "dissed" by my colleague from across the river.

I wouldn't normally do that, but since he misquoted what I said, I thought I might as well take the same liberties and misquote what he had to say.

First, right there at the end I thought we were almost opening a new front in this debate. Wal-Mart bashing; oh, that is a great liberal sport these days, bashing Wal-Mart. I saw just the hint of Wal-Mart bashing. But I am sorry, I didn't mean to attribute that to my colleague. He walked away from it. So we are not into Wal-Mart bashing. But he did say I wasn't interested in conservation or energy efficiency. Perhaps the reason he didn't vote for the Bond-Levin or Levin-Bond amendments to conserve energy and assure energy efficiency is he didn't understand that we ordered the scientists at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to find the new technologies and require that fuel efficiency improvements be made as technological advances go forward.

That is the whole idea.

How about letting the scientists say what technology actually works? It is a lot more fun on the stump making a political speech saying we are going to double the mileage—and, by the way, forget about it if the lighter cars do kill more people. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has produced those figures: the lighter cars have been killing more people.

The third thing he said was we are going to waive all the environmental rules. We have had continually improving air quality in this country. We are making progress, and we are continuing to make progress. That is extremely important.

Are we going to get rid of the standards? No. How about getting the number of processes? One refinery had 800 different permitting processes to go through. How many different permitting processes do you have to go through? We need to hold these refineries or other new facilities to the standards we are setting to make air cleaner. When government bureaucracy and lawsuits tell them how to build and how to operate the facilities, we get tremendous waste. This is why I am talking about economics. Economics is bringing about conservation, as is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, as are other conservation measures—new appliances with conservation standards.

Each one of us has the ability, in responding to the marketplace as to the price of energy, to make wise decisions about energy usage. The market does work.

If my colleague wants to have an allocation system to tell the American public what kind of cars and trucks they can buy and dictate what cars, trucks, and SUVs can be made by auto

manufacturers, let's have that debate. In the meantime, let us all concede that the auto companies may have missed the mood. They may have made mistakes. They are paying for those mistakes in misjudging the market. But I would rather have the private sector taking the hit because they are in it for the profit motive, and they can afford it, rather than have the government make those decisions which cost jobs, which cost our economy.

I am hoping a Member will have an additional amendment. I will look for that.

I do not intend to answer my colleague from Illinois any further other than to say that if he cites my position, I will probably disagree with his characterization of my position. But we will have this debate perhaps again when we have an honest to goodness Energy bill, maybe one that fast-tracks refineries that would get us the oil, diesel, aviation fuel, and the coal gas we need.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois, from the southern part of Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I am from all of Illinois.

The Presiding Officer must face the same thing in the State of Florida with your loyalties for sports teams. You cannot win in the State of Illinois. No matter where you go you will run into opposition—whether a Cardinals, Cubs, or White Sox fan.

I think we have made that issue. At least my position on that issue is clear as we can.

I say in closing, and I certainly invite the Senator from Missouri to respond, we ought to ask ourselves the basic question: If you have a business in America that is unsuccessful, and the business has a loss in one given year, we provide in our Tax Code that business can carry that loss forward from the year that it was experienced, so next year's profits can be reduced accordingly. Your tax liability is reduced accordingly. It is a carry-forward provision for business losses.

It seems to me consistent to say that those corporations which have extraordinary profit taking—as we see with these major oil companies—would be subject to additional taxes.

I am sure the Senator from Missouri disagrees with me. But we have now seen virtually—I am trying to figure the calculation—roughly 30 percent increase in profits for the major oil companies in the United States of America, over the last 6 months, over last year. Last year was a big year for them. Last year, in the same 6-month period, they had about \$39 billion in profits. This was with \$40-a-barrel oil. This year it is up 30 percent over last year's profits.

Why? We know why. When we go to the gas station, we know why. The price at the pump has gone up dramatically.

The Senator from Missouri thinks this is holy ground, that we should not

touch that money: My goodness, these people were brave enough and creative enough and entrepreneurial enough to raise gasoline prices, and we ought to accept that as the reality of capitalism.

But the Tax Code says even if you are profitable you pay taxes. My position is that if you have these windfall profits at the expense of our economy and families and businesses you should face a windfall profits tax. The money should come back to consumers. The money should come back to fund the LIHEAP program. The money should come back to create an incentive for automobile manufacturers to make fuel-efficient cars. I don't think that is an unreasonable position to take.

If the oil companies know that every dollar they make in profits by raising the price of gasoline at the pump is subject to a 50-percent tax, maybe they will slow down a little bit. Maybe they will not raise the prices as high next time. Wouldn't that be nice if there was some disincentive for these prices being skyrocketed and kited on the average family and business? I don't think it is unreasonable. When we consider the alternatives we are facing in this town right now, it makes a lot of sense.

We have arguments being made now that to pay for Hurricane Katrina we have to cut basic programs in this country for the most vulnerable Americans. The idea of cutting food stamps and health care for the poorest people in our country in order to pay for the victims of Hurricane Katrina strikes me as unfair to the nth degree. Why in the world would we help the poor people of Katrina by hurting other poor people in America and look the other way when it comes to the profits of oil companies?

For goodness' sake, a windfall profit tax I have proposed could generate about \$40 billion. That is a big chunk of the \$60 billion we have heard appropriated for Hurricane Katrina.

Is it unreasonable that these oil companies would help to pay for the greatest natural disaster in modern memory? At least something good would come of it, and we would not be cutting the programs and the basic policies that help the most vulnerable people in America.

I didn't mean to try to get the last word in. I wanted to give the Senator from Missouri that opportunity, but because he is chairman of the subcommittee it means he will ultimately have the last word on this bill and anything else that comes before the Senate.

#### AVIAN FLU

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, there is another issue which is timely, one that is growing in interest and intensity across America; that is, the challenge of avian flu. Public health officials have been worrying about this for the last several years. But an avian flu epidemic is not yesterday's news. Sadly, it